

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 ABF-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IGA-02

AID-05 EB-08 ACDA-12 SS-15 L-03 /063 W

-----043794 271316Z /43

R 261045Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8831

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 2729

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PCAT, TH, US

SUBJ: SALE OF V150 ARMORED CARS

REF: BANGKOK 1893

1. MR. M. B. RUFFIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, ALLIED RESEARCH ASSOCIATES OF BALTIMORE, MD., AND OF MECAR S.A. OF BELGIUM, VISITED EMBASSY RECENTLY IN REGARD TO SALE OF CADILLAC GAGE ARMORED CARS (V150) TO THE RTG. HE SAID THAT ALL CADILLAC GAGE V150S SOLD TO DATE WHICH HAD A 90 MM GUN INSTALLED, INCLUDING THOSE BOUGHT BY INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA, USED THE MECAR GUN. HE CLAIMED THAT THE MECAR GUN ORIGINALLY WAS TO BE INSTALLED ON THE V150S FOR THAILAND BUT, FOR REASONS UNKNOWN TO HIM, A 90 MM GUN TO BE MANUFACTURED BY COCKERILL, ANOTHER BELGIAN MUNITIONS COMPANY, NOW WAS TO BE INSTALLED. HE WAS IN THAILAND, HE SAID, TO TRY TO DETERMINE THE REASON FOR THE CHANGE, CLAIMING THAT THE COCKERILL GUN WAS UNTESTED AND UNSUITABLE FOR THE V150. RUFFIN CLAIMS THE COCKERILL GUN IS MUCH HEAVIER, LONGER AND HAS A MUCH STRONGER RECOIL. HE SAID THAT THE COCKERILL AMMUNITION IS NOT INTERCHANGEABLE WITH THE MECAR AMMUNITION USED BY THE MALAYSIANS FOR THEIR MECAR-EQUIPPED V150S.

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2. EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT EMBASSY COULD NOT INTERVENE IN CONFLICTING CLAIMS OF U.S. COMMERCIAL SUPPLIERS AND THAT WE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF WHICH GUN WAS TO BE INSTALLED UNDER THE TERMS OF THE RTG-CADILLAC GAGE CONTRACT. IN RESPONSE TO RUFFIN'S INQUIRY, EMBOFF PROVIDED NAME OF CAPTAIN WIRUN KONGCHAN OF SUPREME COMMAND AS A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO SHOULD HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE OF THE

TRANSACTION.

3. CAPTAIN WIRUN, AFTER MEETING WITH RUFFIN AND AT DIRECTION OF ADMIRAL JINAWAT WONGPENSRI, J-2, SUPREME COMMAND, CALLED THE EMBASSY AND EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER THE CHANGE HE CLAIMED THE RTG HAD NOT BEEN AWARE UNTIL RUFFIN ARRIVED ON THE SCENE. WIRUN SAID THAT THE SIZE, WEIGHT AND RECOIL FORCE OF THE GUN TO BE INSTALLED IN THE V150 IS CRITICAL. HE EXPLAINED THAT WHEN RTG REPRESENTATIVES VISITED CADILLAC GAGE LAST YEAR, THEY OBSERVED THE MECAR GUN IN OPERATION, FOUND IT SATISFACTORY AND RECOMMENDED IT BE INSTALLED IN THE V150S. HE SAID THESE SAME REPS AND ADM JINAWAT, WHO WAS ONE OF THE SIGNATORS OF THE CONTRACT WITH CADILLAC GAGE, WERE SURPRISED AND UPSET TO LEARN THAT CADILLAC GAGE WAS PLANNING TO INSTALL THE COCKERILL GUN INSTEAD OF THE MECAR GUN. WIRUN SAID THAT THE CONTRACT GAVE CADILLAC GAGE THE OPTION OF WHICH GUN TO EMPLOY BUT THE RTG FULLY EXPECTED TO GET THE MECAR RIN WHICH THEY HAD OBSERVED AND WHICH IS SIMILAR TO THAT INSTALLED IN THE MALAYSIAN V150. (THE RRG GOT THE IDEA OF PURCHASING THE V150 AFTER OBSERVING IT IN ACTION DURING JOINT BORDER OPERATIONS WITH THE MALAYSIANS LAST YEAR.) ACCORDING TO WIRUN, THE COCKERILL GUN HAS NEVER BEEN OBSERVED BY THE THAI AND, ALTHOUGH TYEY WOULD PREFER THE MECAR GUN, THERE IS RELUCTANCE TO CALL THIS EMBARRASSING DEVELOPMENT TO THE ATTENTION OF GENERAL CHAROEN PHONGPHANIT, CHIEF OF STAFF, SUPREME COMMAND, WHO ALSO SIGNED THE CONTRACT. WIRUN SOLICITED EMBOFF'S ADVICE BUT WAS TOLD THAT EMBASSY COULD NOT JUDGE THE VALIDITY OF THE CLAIMS OF MR. RUFFIN

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AND THAT IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE EMBASSY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN CONFLICTING CLAIMS OF COMPETING U.S. COMMERCIAL FIRMS. EMBOFF AGREED THAT THE SPECIFICATIONS OF THE WEAPONS IN QUESTION WERE OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE, BUT SAID IT WAS UP TO THE RTG TO DETERMINE WHICH GUN BEST SUITED ITS NEEDS.

4. PRESENTLY, NEITHER EMBASSY NOR JUSMAGTHAI PERSONNEL ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE MECAR OR COCKERILL GUNS OR THE RELIABILITY OF THE FIRMS INVOLVED. WE OBVIOUSLY DO NOT WISH TO GET DRAWN INTO COMMERCIAL COMPETITION OVER A BUSINESS DEAL. HOWEVER, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO SEE THE RTG INVEST A CONSIDERABLE SUM OF MONEY IN A U.S. COMMERCIAL ACQUISITION THAT WOULD PROVE UNSATISFACTORY TO THAI NEEDS. RUFFIN SAID HE TALKED WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS IN EA, PM, AND OMC PRIOR TO COMING TO BANGKOK. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION OR OBSERVATIONS DEPARTMENT MAY HAVE ON THIS CASE.

WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SALES, MILITARY VEHICLES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO02729
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780040-1041
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780121/aaaaarqe.tel
Line Count: 111
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: da4a09e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 1893
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3712909
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SALE OF V150 ARMORED CARS
TAGS: MASS, PCAT, TH, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/da4a09e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014